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ABSTRACT

This document explores the changes the 21st century will impose on community colleges and discusses the need for colleges to alter their objectives. It offers five points that colleges should consider in redesigning their organization: (1) change must be mission-driven, containing the element of accountability; (2) the new process must be owned by all who are affected; (3) time must be a factor considered and allowed; (4) the change process is dynamic, with the characteristics of flexibility, constant revision, and continuous improvement; and (5) the process requires benchmarks and an outcomes base. Colleges must teach the skills needed by the "21st century knowledge worker," which include communication ability, both oral and written; team work; personal flexibility; acceptance of ambiguity; ability to work in a diverse environment; and an adequate ethics foundation. Successful, flexible institutions will also have dedicated staff who work as a team, significant achievements, excellent instruction and service ratings, and a focus on establishing new programs and degrees. (AS)

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COLLABORATIONS THAT WORK: PUBLIC/PRIVATE INITIATIONS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

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Introduction

In the last days of the 20th century, America's community colleges are in an interesting position. As part of the nation's education establishment, they have one foot planted firmly in the 20th century. Yet, as leaders in the process of educational change, they prepare to step uncertainly into the millennium. What does the future promise?

Nadler, Shaw, and Walton, principles in the New York-based Delta Consulting Group, are concise. Change will be the only constant of the 21st century. The type of change, however, will be radically different. There will be a complete break with previous procedure. Organizations will have to reconstruct every aspect of their operation. Assumptions, orientations, routines, and core values must be re-examined and restructured. The goal is to become "change-capable." The new gestalt is based on accepting change as a constant element in the organizational culture. Change becomes redefined as opportunity; strategies are devised to make it an advantage. The hallmarks of the organization are responsiveness and flexibility.[1] How will the paradigm of the 21st century impact community colleges?

A Broadened Vision

In 1995, Roueche, Taber, and Roueche completed a national study of community college response to change. Their work reflects the classic line from Lewis Carroll. In Alice in Wonderland the Red Queen tells Alice: "Today, we must run twice as fast as yesterday just to stay in the same place. To get ahead we must run even faster." Colleges must look beyond their

traditional vision to identify the "continuing and emerging realities of the new time."[2] They identified colleges that were implementing the procedures needed to become change capable. The characteristics common among these institutions are interesting:

- Staff rely on courage, commitment, and confidence;
- Immersion in the ever-larger community is a collegewide effort;
- Achievements have been significant;
- Resulting products and instruction have been deemed excellent;
- The focus has emerged as the establishment of new programs and degrees.[3]

These results point toward the emergence of change capable colleges. Are there elements of the process that can be adopted by colleges interested in broadening their vision?

The Roueche study provided five reference points that colleges can use as a template for organizational redesign. They are:

- Change must be mission driven. Often the process will require redefinition along with restructuring. The new approach must contain elements of accountability.
- The new process must be owned by all who are affected. The process takes time, demands patience, and relies on expanded communication and input.
- System redesign is time consuming. Resources and delivery expand beyond the parameters established for them.
- The change process is dynamic. Characteristics include flexibility, constant revision, and continuous improvement.
- The process requires benchmarks and an outcomes base. Data must be collected systematically, used for performance improvements, and disseminated widely to enhance ownership.[4]

The value of these reference points is that they allow a college to measure its progress toward the new organizational forums that will characterize the 21st century. What forces exist that suggest change capability is essential for organizational survival?

What's In It For Us?

In 1995 the American Council on Education convened a business--higher education forum. For over two years, leaders from both sectors worked to produce a paradigm for educational reform. Three of the results reinforce the findings of the Roueche study.

The first result raises concern. Participants describe a "chasm" that separates academic and corporate America. Both parties fail to understand the mission and requirements of the other. The second result provides a ray of hope. Corporate leaders describe today's college graduates as well prepared technically but not well qualified to lead in the work place given the dramatically changing conditions. The third result lends focus. High performance work places for which the new graduates must be prepared are a blend of technology and human resources that will rely on the emergence of a learning organization (see Table 1).[5] These results contribute to the template needed for educational reform.

The participants in the forum provided a list of the skills needed for what have come to be known as 21st century knowledge workers. They are:

- communication skills, oral and written
- the ability to work in teams
- personal flexibility
- the ability to accept ambiguity comfortably
- the ability to work with people from diverse backgrounds
- adequate ethics training[6]

The template for internal and external change is deceptively simple. Implementation is complex, painful, and time consuming. The Hagerstown Community College/Citibank relationship is a useful case study of the process of becoming change capable.

Conclusion: First Steps on a Journey Without End

The location of the Citicorp division of Citibank in Washington County, Maryland, eight years ago allowed Hagerstown Community College to begin the process of internalizing collaborative change. The first element in the process was to analyze the nature of collaboration. Four steps have taught college personnel the value of the process.

- Working together is essential. The needs of both organizations can be met most efficiently through collaboration.
- The process yields benefits for all partners. Students, college faculty, and business staff learn from the interaction.
- The collaboration is a living system. The process of change has become a constant; the needs of both parties are met through the dynamics.
- The process is both a formal system and a dense web of interpersonal connection. Both aspects enhance the implementation of change. Further, they reinforce both productivity and trust.

The second element is the transfer of technology between the participants. Three steps summarize the development of a synergy:

- Adequate support is provided for both participants to learn from the other. Students, faculty, and staff through on-going interaction develop an understanding of the opposite organization's culture.
- The participants in the process have the skills necessary to become viable change agents. Careful attention to communication and assessment contribute to a team that will effectively manage change.
- The hallmarks of success are communication, cooperation, and collaboration. All participants must be committed to the success of the endeavor.

The third element is the leadership design applied to the collaborative. Participants must design collectively an agenda to achieve mutual benefit. The components include:

- Emphasis on shared priorities, trust, and outcomes. These processes require mutual emphasis and concurrence.
- Honest, on-going assessment of the collaborative. Are we doing the right things and doing them right; should we continue?
- The partners must expand participation so that the needs of a dynamic environment are met. As the environment changes and broadens, more stakeholders may be involved to continue the desired outcomes.

The Hagerstown Community College/Citibank case study is both interesting and illustrative. It has been the template for college reorganization, mission redefinition, and the initiation of other productive collaboratives. Norris of Strategic Initiatives, Inc. characterizes the 21st century as "the Knowledge Age." His perspective of the new age describes the outcomes of the collaborative:

> Perpetual--work and learning will continue to be fused; the process will be repeated over and over;
>
> Distributed learners become part of a pervasive atmosphere of virtual . . . learning resources;
>
> Interactive--all participants will be linked together and function as members of learning teams and communities.[7]

Blustain of Coopers & Lybrand LLP, Boston, in his description of a process model for higher education redesign synthesizes a system for change management. "[There] are inevitable results of change in process. . . . They touch the essence of the institution's assumptions about how people work and what they must do to succeed. [The] benefits from the outputs or outcomes of the process . . . provide a framework for . . . progressive improvement.[8] The Hagerstown Community College/Citibank experience validates his perception.

Table 1
Characteristics of the New World of Work and the Old

Traditional Work	High-Performance Work
Markets	
Limited Competition	Global Competition
Standardization	Customization
Unlimited Resources	Limited Resources
Regulation	Deregulation
Corporate Characteristics	
Mass Production	Small Lots
Hierarchies	Teams
Large Bureaucratic Organizations	Smaller Flexible Organizations
Integrated Companies	Outsourcing
Homogeneous Work Force	Diverse Work Force
Employee Implications	
Brawn/Metal-Bending	Brains/Mind-Bending
Job Security: Seniority	Job Security: Skills
Job-Specific Skills	Broad Skills
Careers Built with One Employer	Careers Built in One Occupation
Benefits Tied to Employer	Portable Benefits
Pay for Time Served	Pay for Performance
Finite Education	Lifelong Learning

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